

Between Mars and Venus: Transatlantic strategic cultures and Canadian Earthlings?

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A few years ago Robert Kagan surprised analysts of transatlantic affairs with a thought-provoking article that succinctly summarized the level of tensions in light of America's global assertiveness after the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon on 9/11.¹ The essence of his argument was twofold: first, the EU and the US have strategically grown apart and second, the Europeans have become accustomed to a peaceful European continent. Based on Roman mythology, Kagan asserted that the European are from Venus (representing the Roman god of love) while the US is from Mars (the god of war). In Kagan's mind, the level of peace and comfort accustomed societies in Europe to low levels of defence spending and thus military capabilities², while the US consistently maintained powerful, capable, and determined military institutions of war. Because of these differences, so Kagan, the EU and the US do not share a common strategic culture any more.³

However, if the EU and the US have strategically grown apart, what can we say about Canada's strategic location in transatlantica as being a country that has shared long strategic relationships with both?⁴ Its history of strategic thought showed a strong predisposition towards issues of European security while being confronted with a geopolitical proximity to the US in North America.⁵ Both factors shaped its strategic thinking, and provides meaning to the ongoing strategic debates surrounding NATO's campaign in Afghanistan.

I will answer the above research question by way of examining the strategic cultures of the EU, the US, and Canada between 2001-2009 through their national security strategies.⁶ Comparative studies on strategic culture(s) are rare, and most of them concentrate on individual country studies without making regional or cross-regional comparisons.⁷ Specifically, strategic cultures allow us to examine states'

material and the ideational factors (such as norms, values, and identity) informing foreign policy decisions, and thus provides meaning of particular social actions regarding national security issues in the post-9/11 world order.⁸

I argue that Canada's strategic culture can, defined as "the idea that each political community has a particular and individual approach to security policy"⁹, neither be unquestionably identified with either the Mars or the Venus camp. It is influenced normatively by unique American as well as European predispositions of national security (such as values, commonly held beliefs, socially accepted principles) that are deeply rooted in history as well as collective cultural experiences. However, the extent of shared normative security values and commonly held belief systems with the EU appear to be greater than those held with the U.S. Consequently, those deeply ingrained value and belief systems carry a greater promise to be more enduring than the habitual Canada-US security practices. In short, these (behavioural) predispositions generate practices, perceptions and attitudes that are not governed by formal rules. That is to say that Canada and the EU are strategically closer to one another than one might think.

It is against this theoretical backdrop that I focus on what the three security strategies display worldviews, mandates, and the role of international organizations in global politics.

I. Worldview

The United States perceived itself as the winner of the Cold War leading to 'the end of history' and making the US the sole hegemon in world politics.¹⁰ In contrast, Europe's integration process has given meaning to its perceptions of peace, security, and prosperity in Europe since the late 1950s. As Jolyon Howorth noted, "the

EU has been constructed through peace and dialogue"¹¹, and mandated the EU to export the process of European integration¹² to other regions of the world,¹³ while at the same time downgrading the importance attributed to the use of force or instruments of military statecraft to a bare minimum.¹⁴ The primary security objective of the EU therefore was to maintain its economic capability and to export the values of a market economy across continental Europe.¹⁵

September 11th reminded Canadians of their complex strategic location in transatlantic affairs.¹⁶ Since 1867 Canada has been conceived as being a 'European country' by sharing cultural norms, principles, and demography with Europe. Its federation was built on the foundations of French settlers who began a new life in what was later called Lower Canada. Second, geographically speaking, Canada was bound to share the continent with the United States. The veracity of this geographical actuality was particularly pertinent in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks on 9/11 when Ottawa was increasingly confronted with a bellicose neighbour. In this collective U.S. sentiment of insecurity and vulnerability¹⁷, Canada felt the prioritization of defending and enforcing the world's "longest undefended frontier"¹⁸ against potential terrorists infiltrating either country. Put differently, because of this extensive economic interdependence with the United States, social pressures were levied upon Canada by the US government to step up its commitment for the defence of the North American continent: security trumped trade after 9/11¹⁹, and Canada could not afford to become a strategic liability to the US.²⁰

II. Mandates

First, the NSS was not fettered by regional limitations, and advocated a global role for the US that rested on a normative dictum of a distinctly

US internationalism.²¹ Second, America was to fight a global war against terrorism; if necessary pre-emptively. While hunting terrorists, exporting values such as democracy, the rule of law, and freedom abroad, “the United States seeks to extend freedom across the globe [...]”²². These normative ambitions were conjoined with the policy of regime change²³ – that was, to change corrupt and dictatorial regimes that suppressed their own people, and to turn them into prosperous democracies.²⁴

Like the NSS, the ESS also provided an activist interpretation of security.²⁵ Yet, Europe’s ambitions were more regionally focused on the immediate European neighbourhood²⁶, and the normative predisposition that successful European integration policies were a key ingredient that made the EU “so prosperous, so secure and so free”²⁷. Consequently, the chief mandate of the EU was to export this prosperity and to help build that European neighborhood.²⁸ Acting pre-emptively was believed to be illegal, so was acting militarily without the explicit endorsement of the UN.²⁹ The use of force was seen as the last resort³⁰, and highlighted the importance of civilian crisis management capabilities (policing, the rule of law, strengthening civilian administration, negotiation and consultation as the primary tools for addressing conflicts).³¹

III. Third Parties and International Organizations
The EU cherished the values of multilateralism and acting in concert with other like-minded states.³² Notwithstanding these commonly held beliefs, Sten Rynning argues that the EU did not hesitate to use force if all channels of diplomacy were exhausted³³, and thus contradicts Kagan’s assertions that the EU shies away from using military force.³⁴

By contrast, while America’s allies and friends were invited to join the US in its efforts, Washington reserved the right to act unilaterally.³⁵ US Secretary of Defence, Donald Rumsfeld, put it succinctly: “When it comes to our security we really don’t need anybody’s permission”.³⁶ So-called ‘coalitions of the willing’ replaced long-standing alliances, at least temporarily, which has been coined “multilateralism à la carte”³⁷.

For Canada multilateralism was seen a guarantor of a rules-based and predictable international system and provided international legitimacy. Normatively, multilateralism was the foundation of Canadian internationalism. It has been the core principle of Canadian foreign policy³⁸, and Ottawa has a legacy of establishing and endorsing international institutions and the rule of law.³⁹

Conclusion

Before 9/11 North America was a “geostrategic backwater”⁴⁰ for NATO. For decades, the epicentre of its security interests was located in Western Europe. With the terrorist attacks on 9/11 this narrative was about to change while a new meaning was given to North America as a continent.

By using strategic culture, the essay examined the question whether Canada’s strategic culture showed a normative convergence with either the Europeans, or the Americans, or both. While both the European as well as the Canadian security strategy were delivered in response to 9/11 and the NSS of 2002⁴¹, the article finds that Canada’s strategic culture could not be judged as belonging to one particular camp—that is neither Mars nor Venus. Perhaps it is better described as the Earthlings—that is in between Mars and Venus. Indeed, a normative convergence was apparent in each of the three selected issue sectors that this article examined – that the actors geostrategic predispositions in world politics, mandates, and the role of international organizations.

Regarding the first category, Canada’s close geographical proximity to the United States⁴² and its new predispositions (or meanings) of national security in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks on 9/11 affected Canada’s role perception in North America primarily by realizing that it could not become a strategic liability to the United States. Against this backdrop, the immediacy of addressing the ‘new’ American-felt insecurity aligned Canada closer with American beliefs about the international security governance,⁴³ and supports the commonly held wisdom that Canada views the world through the prism of the US.⁴⁴

Second, the defence of the Canadian and thus North American homeland was assigned the highest mandate in the Canadian security strategy. Put differently, the defence of Canada was given a new meaning post-9/11 and correlated with American predispositions of security and national defence.

Finally, the US conceived international organizations as agents of states. By contrast, Canada and the EU perceived them as legitimizing institutions that have a role of their own in a network of global security actors. Specifically, the ESS formulated the vision of a “stronger international society, well functioning international institutions and a rule-based international order”⁴⁵. Multilateral internationalism was conceived in Canada and in Europe as the guarantor for promoting and enforcing a rules-based and predictable international order, and, in both cases, has been part of their security discourse since the end of World War II.⁴⁶ Like the EU, Canada assigned value to the norms and principles of cooperation, an international order based on effective multilateralism, the rule of law, and a strong commitment to international institutions, including NATO.

While the Obama administration may have modified some of the strategic decisions of the previous administration, more research is needed examining the ‘keepers’ of strategic cultures and how, if at all, they change. A second useful avenue for future research is an examination of the actual strategic behaviour of those actors over time and to see if that behaviour matched the visions of the strategies.

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Notes

- 1) Robert Kagan, „Power and Weakness.“ *Policy Review* 113 (2002).
- 2) Robert Kagan, *Of Paradise and Power: America and Europe in the New World Order* (New York: Vintage Books, 2004).
- 3) *Ibid.*, 4.
- 4) I acknowledged that the argument and the analysis are somewhat simplified as the Canadian and American security strategy are national strategies, whereas the EU's is a supranational strategy that reflects the views of all EU independent sovereign countries. It is also noted here that there are methodological difficulties here in comparing two state-based security strategies with that of a supranational organization. However, since Europe's foreign and defence policy still remains highly intergovernmental as opposed to supranational, this approach appears to be justified.
- 5) While the first settlers to Canada crossed the ocean from Europe, Canada has exhibited a strong transatlantic interest in European affairs since 1867. For an argument of France's influence on Canadian strategic culture, see for example, forthcoming David G. Haglund and Justin Massie, „L'abandon de l'abandon: The Reemergence of France in Quebec's and Canada's Strategic Culture.“ *Québec Studies* 49 (2010). For an excellent discussion on the geopolitical proximity to the United States see, for example, Charles F. Doran, *Forgotten partnership: U.S.-Canada relations today* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984); Joel J. Sokolsky, *The future of Canadian-American defence relations: trends in U.S. strategy and the Canadian defence posture*, Centre for International Relations occasional paper, no. 10 (Kingston, Ont.: Centre for International Relations Queen's University, 1986); Joel J. Sokolsky, „Canada, the United States and NATO: A Tale of Two Pillars“, in *North American perspectives on European security*, ed. Michael K. Hawes and Joel J. Sokolsky (Lewiston N.Y., USA: E. Mellen Press, 1990); Joel J. Sokolsky, *The „away game“: Canada-United States security relations outside North America*, IRPP working paper series; no. 2004-091 (Montréal: Institute for Research on Public Policy, 2004).
- 6) As a result, one obvious limitation of this analysis is that it does not engage into an evaluation of the strategic behaviour of the three actors in question. Its analysis is also limited to the Presidency of the George W. Bush administration from 2001-2009. In the following the security strategies will be abbreviated as follows: American National Security Strategy (NSS), European security strategy (ESS), and Canadian national security strategy (CNSS).
- 7) The need for comparative analysis in the discussion on strategic culture has been long been made explicit. See, for ex-

ample, Jeffrey S. Lantis and Darryl Howlett, „Strategic Culture,“ in *Strategy in the contemporary world: an introduction to strategic studies*, ed. John Baylis, Steve Smith, and Eliot Cohen (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 97.

8) Space does not allow us to discuss the 4 generations of strategic cultures. A good summary can be found in Benjamin Zyla, „Overlap or Opposition? EU and NATO’s Strategic (Sub-)Culture“, *Contemporary Security Policy*, 32 3, 667-687; Theo Farrell, *The norms of war: cultural beliefs and modern conflict* (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2005); Theo Farrell and Terry Terriff, *The sources of military change: culture, politics, technology* (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2002).

9) Alan Bloomfield and Kim Richard Nossal, „Towards an Explicative Understanding of Strategic Culture: The Cases of Australia and Canada,“ *Contemporary Security Policy* 28, no. 2 (2007).

10) Charles Krauthammer, „The Unipolar Moment,“ *Foreign Affairs* 70 (1990/1991); Barry R. Posen, „Commandos of the Commons: Military Foundation of U.S. Hegemony,“ *International Security* 28, no. 1 (2003). Cesare Merlini, „US Hegemony and the Roman Analogy: A European View,“ *International Spectator* 37, no. 3 (2002).

11) Jolyon Howorth, *Security and Defence Policy in the European Union* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 186.

12) Hartmut Mayer and Henri Vogt, *A Responsible Power? Ethical Foundations of EU External Affairs* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2006); Justin Vaïsse, *Transformational Diplomacy*, Chailott Paper (Paris: EU Institute for Security Studies, 2007).

13) For further analysis of this notion see Vaïsse, *Transformational Diplomacy*.

14) The EU also does not defend its moral principles of liberty or democracy by using force. See Christoph Meyer, „Convergence towards a European Strategic Culture? A Constructivist Framework for Explaining Changing Norms,“ *European Journal of International Relations* 11, no. 4 (2005).

15) Richard Whitman, „Road Map for a Route March? (De-)civilianizing through the EU’s Security Strategy,“ *European Foreign Affairs Review* 11, no. 1 (2006): 9.

16) For a more detailed discussion see Bloomfield and Nossal, „Towards an Explicative Understanding of Strategic Culture,“; Joel J. Sokolsky, „A Seat at the Table: Canada and Its Alliances,“ *Armed Forces and Society* 16, no. 1 (1989). For a causal relationship between culture and felt insecurity see Barry R. Schneider and Jerrold M. Post, *Know thy enemy: profiles of adversary leaders and their strategic cultures*, 2nd ed. (Maxwell Air Force Base, Ala.: USAF Counterproliferation Center, 2003).

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18) Edgar W. McInnis, *The Unguarded Frontier: A History of American-Canadian Relations* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, Doran, 1942).

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20) David G. Haglund, „North American Cooperation in an Era of Homeland Security,“ *Orbis* 46 (2003): 691.

21) White House, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington, D.C.: White House, 2002), 1.

22) White House, „The National Security Strategy of the United States of America,“ (Washington, D.C.: White House, 2006), 3.

23) *Ibid.*, 5, 12. Some authors have pointed out that regime change in the Middle East and the promotion of democracy there is not necessarily a bad policy Fouad Ajami, „Iraq and the Arab’s Future,“ *Foreign Affairs* 82, no. 1 (2003). For a critical analysis of regime change see Philip H. Gordon, „Bush’s Middle East Vision,“ *Survival* 45, no. 1 (2003).

24) White House, „National Security Strategy,“ 5-7, 27.

25) Pascal Vennesson, „Europe’s Grand Strategy: The Search for a Postmodern Realism,“ in *European Foreign Policy in an Evolving International System*, ed. Nicola Casarini and Constanza Musu (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 18.

26) European Council, „A Secure Europe in A Better World: European Security Strategy,“ (Brussels: European Council, 2003), 7. On details of the EU neighborhood policy see for example Roland Dannreuther, ed. *European Union Foreign and Security Policy: Towards a Neighbourhood Strategy* (New York: Routledge, 2004).

27) European Council, „A Secure Europe in A Better World,“ 1.

28) Vennesson, „Europe’s Grand Strategy,“ 18-19; F. Algieri and Arnold Kammel, „In search of structure: the EU’s foreign policy strategy against the background of a missing global order,“ *European View* 8, no. 2 (2008): 289.

29) Bastian Giegerich, „European Positions and American Responses: ESDP-NATO Compatibility,“ in *European Foreign Policy in an Evolving International System*, ed. Nicola Casarini and Constanza Musu (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 44.

30) Sven Bernhard Gareis, „Sicherheitspolitik zwischen Mars und Venus? Die Sicherheitsstrategien der USA und der EU im Vergleich,“ in *Die Beziehungen zwischen NATO und EU: Partnerschaft, Konkurrenz, Rivalität?*, ed. Johannes Varwick (Opladen: Verlag Barbara Buderich, 2005), 88; Kenneth Keulman, *European Security and Defence Policy: The EU’s Search for a Strategic Role*, ed. Janet Adamski, Mary Troy Johnson, and Christina M. Schweiss, *Old Europe, New Security: Evolution for a Complex World* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2006), 52.

31) Christina M. Schweiss, „European Security and Defence Policy: Capabilities for a Complex World,“ *ibid.*, 88. See also 2385th European Council meeting, *General Affairs*, 19-20.XI.2001, Brussels, 19-20 November 2001.

32) Mary Troy Johnson, *Transatlantic Security Values: Hegemonic Versus Shared Power*, *ibid.*, 4.

33) Sten Rynning, „European Union: Towards a Strategic Culture?,“ *Security Dialogue* 34, no. 4 (2003): 486.

34) Sven Biscop, „The ABC of European Union Strategy: Ambition, Benchmark, Culture,“ in *EGMONT Papers* (Brussels: EGMONT, Royal Institute for International Relations, 2007), 5; Kagan, *Of Paradise and Power*. Indeed, by simply scanning EU-led military and civilian peace operations,

35) Robert Jervis, „Understanding the Bush doctrine,“ *Political Science Quarterly* 118 (2003): 365.

36) Dan Baltz, „President Puts Onus Back on Iraqi Leader,“ *The Washington Post*, 7 March 2003. NATO, for example sent its AWAC’s reconnaissance planes to help control North American airspace. However, some analysts of US foreign policy have pointed out that this disregard for international organizations is not a novelty in US foreign policy Benjamin Zyla, „How the EU supports the Bush Doctrine,“ *Review of European and Russian Affairs* 1, no. 2 (2006); Benjamin Zyla, „Multilateralism a la carte? - The George W. Bush administration and traditions of US foreign policy,“ *WeltTrends: Zeitschrift für Internationale Politik und Vergleichende Studien* 54, no. Frühjahr (2007).

37) Fraser Cameron, „Utilitarian Multilateralism: The Implications of 11 September 2001 for US Foreign Policy,“ *Politics* 22, no. 2 (2002): 68.

38) Sokolsky, „A Seat at the Table.“

39) Thomas F. Keating, *Canada and world order: the multilateralist tradition in Canadian foreign policy*, 2nd ed. (Don Mills, Ont.: Oxford University Press, 2002).

40) Joel J. Sokolsky, „Between Venus and Mars: Canada and the Transatlantic Gap,“ *Columbia International Affairs Online* www.ciaonet.org, accessed June 7th, 2004 (2004): 6.

41) For this argument see Alyson J. K. Bailes, „The European Security Strategy: An Evolutionary History,“ in *SIPRI Policy Paper No. 10* (Stockholm: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 2005), for a slight disagreement see Klaus Becher,

„Has-Been, Wannabe, or Leader: Europe’s Role in the World After the 2003 European Security Strategy,“ *European Security* 13, no. 4 (2004).

42) R.J. Sutherland, „Canada’s Long Term Strategic Situation,“ *International Journal* (1962).

43) On a similar note see also David G. Haglund, „Canada and NATO after September 11, 2001,“ in *In search of a new relationship: Canada, Germany, and the United States*, ed. Markus Kaim and Ursula Lehmkuhl (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2005).

44) or this argument see Doran, *Forgotten partnership: The future of Canadian-American defence relations: trends in U.S. strategy and the Canadian defence posture*; Sokolsky, „Canada, the United States and NATO: A Tale of Two Pillars,“; Sokolsky, *The „away game“: Canada-United States security relations outside North America*.

45) European Council, „A Secure Europe in A Better World,“ 9.

46) Keating, *Canada and world order*.

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